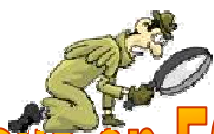
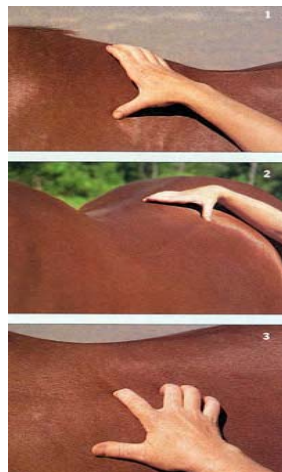


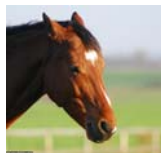
**Mark Jordan
 Matthew Elliott
 Jennifer Enger
 Michelle Singer
 Emily Harrison**



Focus on EQUINE BACK PAIN



At some point in their riding careers, most horse owners have observed what appear to be signs of back pain in their horse. These signs vary from sensitivity and muscle spasms when grooming, behavioral changes such as ear pinning when tacking up, sinking away from the rider while mounting, to major performance changes such as stopping at fences.



The most common causes of back pain include; poor saddle fitting, improper riding technique, and lack of conditioning and fitness of the horse. Even sudden changes in work intensity or footing can trigger back soreness. Acute trauma such as a fall can induce back strain. Limb soreness, especially hocks and stifles, can cause a horse to assume protective postures that aggravate the muscles in the back. Dermatological conditions may develop under the saddle pad area which can lead to increased sensitivity of the back.

Less common causes of back pain include impingement of the dorsal spinous processes also known as kissing lesions, where the spinous processes may overlap and bony proliferation may induce pain. Osteoarthritis may develop in the spine between the vertebral articulations. Fractures of the dorsal spinous processes are rare, but seen occasionally.

It is essential to differentiate between primary back pain, back pain secondary to a limb problem, and pure behavioral issues. This requires a thorough physical exam, a saddle fitting evaluation, an exam in motion, possible local analgesia of the back or limbs to rule in/out suspicious areas, and diagnostic imaging such as radiographs, nuclear scintigraphy (bone scan), and ultrasonography.

Once the source of back pain has been identified, there are a variety of treatments available. Treatment goals are to remove the pain and make the horse more comfortable as soon as possible, and to promote back fitness and strength.

- † Proper saddle fitting by your veterinarian is an essential component of any treatment regime.
- † An individualized training and conditioning program should be developed in conjunction with your veterinarian.
- † Symptoms of back pain can sometimes be relieved with systemic non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications and muscle relaxants such as Bute and Robaxin.
- † Local back injections of corticosteroids and a plant extract called Sarapin are used effectively to treat bony abnormalities.
- † Surgery is reserved for special cases of impingement of dorsal spinous processes.
- † Adjunct therapies such as acupuncture can be used to manage back problems.



RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

We'd like to recognize Rick Neumann out at Muscoot Farm for providing life saving colostrum for another farm's baby. We'd also like to acknowledge Trish Panigrahi and her family for establishing the MHVP RAK FUND.

Thank you to all of you that participate in these random acts everyday!

"You can never do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late."

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Truly great friends are hard to find, difficult to leave, and impossible to forget."

WELCOME DR. EMILY HARRISON, DVM

Dr. Emily Harrison, DVM is a Westchester native and a Cornell graduate that is thrilled to be returning here to her roots. Dr. Harrison spent four years as part of a research team studying equine "heaves" in addition she worked in the reproductive department at Cornell. She has special interests in equine reproduction, internal and sports medicine.

Dr. Harrison use to ride and compete at Fox Hill Farm in Pleasantville. She is well-acquainted with "horse crazy" people (being one herself)! In her spare time, Dr. Harrison enjoys cross-country skiing, hiking and playing her oboe and English horn. You'll see her and her invaluable companion Hayden, an Australian Shepard, this summer when she joins our practice. We are pleased to have her and she is excited to be joining the MHVP veterinary team. She looks forward to meeting all of you, our valued clients.

Staying tuned in to your horse and his signals can help you stay on top of any back pain and keep you in the (correctly fitted) saddle longer!!

ANATOMY of the BACK

A basic understanding of the structures in the back is essential. The equine back stretches from the withers to the tail head, and is comprised of heavy musculature, the spine, the spinal cord, and various ligaments, nerves and blood vessels (see diagram). The vertebrae which make up the spine have prominent spinous processes, which are most evident at the withers. Between these vertebrae there are articulations, or areas of contact, which help to stabilize the vertebrae.

